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PRIORITY THEMES

PEACE: REFUGEE AND DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1987/24 of 26 May 1987, selected the issue of refugee and displaced women and children, under the priority theme "Peace", for discussion by the Commission at its thirty-fifth session. Based on the work of an expert group that met in Vienna in July 1990, the problems of refugee and displaced women and children are presented with regard to protection, immediate assistance and longer term assistance. The report includes recommendations on improving the legal and physical protection given to refugee and displaced women, and on assistance in the areas of health, education and employment. The importance of refugee women themselves participating in managing their own lives is emphasized. Special attention is given to the problems of refugee and displaced children, especially those that are unaccompanied.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its 1987 session, selected refugee and displaced women and children as one of its priority themes in the area of peace for consideration at its thirty-fifth session. This decision was subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1987/24 of 26 May 1987.

2. In order to provide guidance in the preparation of the priority theme, the Commission at its thirty-fourth session adopted resolution 34/2 on refugee and displaced women, which called on Governments and relevant United Nations agencies as well as the non-governmental organizations concerned to increase their efforts to respond to the needs of refugee women, particularly those of long-standing, as well as displaced women, in the areas of education, health, physical safety, social services, skills training, employment and income-generating activities, and to involve refugee women in planning and implementing of such programmes.

3. In the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1/ the issue of refugee and displaced women and children is raised, and the international community is requested to continue to provide relief assistance and to launch special relief programmes, taking into account the needs of refugee women and children in countries of first asylum. Similarly, relief assistance and special relief programmes should continue to be provided to returnees, displaced women and children. Legal, educational, social, humanitarian and moral assistance should be offered as well as opportunities for their voluntary repatriation, return or settlement.

4. In accordance with the recommendation by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1987/24 that whenever possible expert groups and seminars should be convened to assist in the preparation of priority themes, an Expert Group Meeting on Refugee and Displaced Women and Children took place in Vienna from 2 to 6 July 1990. The Expert Group was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Office at Vienna, in co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and with financial and substantive support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The Expert Group was attended by experts from Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan and Sudan, which are host countries for refugees, as well as by experts or observers from countries that have a special concern for refugees and displaced persons: Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America. Other representatives attended from organizations that provide resettlement assistance or have analysed the problems of refugees, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations. Participants also included individual experts and women from refugee camps. The conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting (see annex) and the analysis prepared for that Meeting form the basis of the present report.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Approximately 80 per cent of the more than 15 million refugees world-wide and the unknown, but probably larger, number of internally displaced persons

READEX FICHE

are women and children. Many of the problems of flight, survival and adjustment that they face are gender-neutral. Men, women and children alike need protection, immediate assistance and help in finding permanent solutions to their plight. However, in practice refugee and displaced women and children face special problems and, thus, present special challenges to the international community if their resources are to be fully utilized.

6. The civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of refugee and displaced women and children under international conventions should be reaffirmed and backed by laws, policies and programmes. Governments, relevant United Nations agencies, and concerned non-governmental organizations should urgently increase their efforts to respond to the needs of refugee and displaced women and children, including addressing the root causes of their situation.

7. The main international organizations concerned - UNHCR, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), World Food Programme (WFP) (joint United Nations/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations programme) and World Health Organization (WHO) - should increase their capacity to respond to the needs of refugee and displaced women and children, and to co-ordinate their efforts more effectively.

8. Clear policies should be developed. All relevant United Nations and other international and regional organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and funding agencies should be encouraged to adopt a policy statement on refugee and displaced women and children, integrating their issues into every aspect of each organization's mandate and programmes, and including a time-frame for implementation.

9. Higher priority should be given by the international community to extending international protection to refugee and displaced women and children, including improvements in the procedures to determine refugees and measures to ensure greater protection from physical violence, sexual abuse, abduction and those circumstances that force women and children into prostitution, or make them vulnerable to exploitation. Recognizing the close link between protection and assistance measures, protection concerns should be borne in mind when planning and implementing assistance programmes.

10. Priority attention should be given to combating malnutrition, improving health conditions, increasing access to safe drinking water, constructing adequate and appropriate shelter, and providing the mechanisms for increased self-reliance by education programmes, employment and income-generation.

11. The full participation of refugee and displaced women in assistance and protection activities should be considered as an integral part of efforts to find longer term solutions to their problems.

12. Preserving the life and physical well-being of refugee and displaced children should be given the highest priority, particularly against physical violence, sexual abuse and recruitment into the armed forces and armed groups. However, the increasing number of undocumented and stateless children require

initiatives to obtain a nationality for them. Governments and international organizations have been called upon to take immediate steps to ensure that all refugee and displaced children have access to basic education.

13. Gender-sensitive staff, women in particular, should be recruited and advanced to management and field positions in international organizations, national Governments and non-governmental organizations in order to provide appropriate assistance and protection to refugee and displaced women. Key staff of organizations working with refugees and displaced persons should receive training on the impact that gender has on their situation.

I. SITUATION OF REFUGEE AND DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

14. The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted on 28 July 1951 by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons defines a refugee as a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." 2/ The Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa on 10 September 1969, which expanded this definition to any person who "owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part of or the whole country, is compelled to seek refuge outside his country of origin". 3/

15. Because refugee status inherently implies movements across international borders, joint responsibility for refugees between international organizations and national Governments has existed for some time and has been codified in international law. Primary responsibility rests with UNHCR. In addition, UNRWA and UNBRO have responsibility for providing assistance to Palestinian refugees and Cambodians displaced along the Thai-Cambodian border. Specialized agencies of the United Nations, such as FAO and WHO, provide expertise in matters related to their areas of interest. In addition, non-governmental organizations have traditionally played an important role.

16. By contrast, the responsibilities of international organizations to internally displaced persons is less clearly defined, even if they have fled for reasons that would have made them refugees had they crossed an international boundary. The mandate of ICRC extends to people internally displaced because of certain conflicts and resident co-ordinators of the United Nations have recently been given responsibility within the United Nations for co-ordinating assistance to displaced persons. The United Nations Co-ordinator for Disaster Relief has also played a role in some situations and the Secretary-General has named Special Representatives to co-ordinate assistance in others.

17. The current refugee population world-wide is estimated at approximately 15 million, of which 6,800,000 are in Asia, 4,600,000 in Africa, 1,400,000 in North America, 1,200,000 in Latin America, 745,000 in Europe and 95,000 in Oceania. 4/ The figures do not include Palestinian refugees under the mandate of UNRWA or displaced Cambodians assisted by UNBRO. The numbers of internally displaced are unknown, but they are estimated to be at least as numerous as

refugees. These statistics are not disaggregated by gender or age, but it is estimated by UNHCR that up to 80 per cent are women and children.

18. Most refugees have moved from one developing country to another, with a large number coming from and going to countries that are among the least developed. For that reason, refugee women and children experience many of the same problems as other women and children in developing countries: poverty, lack of adequate food and safe drinking water, large families, high rates of child mortality and relatively poor health. Added to these problems are the ones associated with the refugee situation: the after-effects of violence, persecution and other traumatic events.

19. Despite these problems, refugee and displaced women are important resources for the development of their communities. Without greater attention to their protection and assistance needs and their capabilities, their contributions could be lost.

A. Protection

20. Women and children share the protection problems experienced by all refugees and displaced persons. They need protection from involuntary return to countries in which they would face persecution; physical protection against armed attacks and other forms of violence; a legal status that accords adequate social and economic rights; and access to basic items such as food, shelter and clothing. In addition, refugee and displaced women and children have legal and physical protection problems that reflect their gender and age.

1. Legal protection problems of refugee women

21. Women who fear persecution because they have transgressed the social norms or laws of their countries regarding the role of women face special difficulties in obtaining refugee status. The definition of "refugee" does not include persecution based on gender as a ground for obtaining refugee status. While some countries recognize women in this situation as "members of a social group", other countries deny them refugee status.

22. Even where the basis for persecution falls into one of the defined areas (for example, political opinion), women often experience difficulties in substantiating their claim. Many women refugees are reluctant to speak openly about the circumstances that caused them to flee, particularly when they have been sexually abused and the interviewers are men. Yet, few countries have an adequate number of female staff involved in their procedures determining refugees. Women are also underrepresented in the protection staff of UNHCR and in the staff of implementing partners.

23. Refugee women also experience difficulty in registering with the proper authorities and obtaining documentation of their refugee status and eligibility for assistance. In some situations, only male heads of household are given documentation. Other constraints include physical and logistic difficulties in reaching the authorities responsible for registration, particularly in cultures that do not permit women to interact with strangers.

2. Legal protection problems of refugee children

24. Children also face difficulties in establishing refugee status, particularly those who are unaccompanied. Immigration officials often doubt that

children, because of their age, could have a well-founded fear of persecution. Also, children may not have access to the information or documents needed to substantiate their claims. There is often a need for advocates to act on behalf of unaccompanied children and ensure that they are granted their full rights to apply for asylum.

25. Statelessness is a problem faced by many refugee children. A country of asylum may hold that a child born on its territory cannot have its nationality if the child's parents are of a different nationality. The country of the parent's origin may hold, however, that the children are ineligible for its nationality if born in another country.

3. Physical protection problems of refugee and displaced women and children

26. The physical security of refugee women and children is at risk both during flight and after they have found asylum. Problems include rape, abduction, sexual harassment and forced induction into military service of children.

27. During flight, refugee women and children have been victimized by pirates, border guards, army and resistance units and others (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.1, paras. 7-8). Piracy attacks in South-East Asia have been of particular concern, with increases in severity and number in recent years, but problems during flight exist in all continents (A/AC.96/727, paras. 8-9).

28. Violence against refugee women and children does not necessarily abate when they reach an asylum country. Perpetrators of such violence include guards and administrators of camps, military personnel and male refugees. Abuses include not only outright rape and abduction but also offers of protection, documents and assistance in exchange for sexual services. Sexual exploitation of refugee women and girls as prostitutes, particularly in urban areas, presents difficult protection problems as well (A/AC.96/XXXIX/CRP.1, paras. 13-14).

29. Many of the traditional, communal processes for protecting women and children from abuse are lost when refugees are forced to leave their homes. Additionally, camp design and operation often contribute to physical insecurity. Among the problems are poor lighting, no security patrols, overcrowding and communal latrines located at some distance from housing. In urban settings, minimal assistance programmes lead many refugee women to turn to prostitution.

30. Deterring violence by prosecuting the attackers often does not work. Prosecuting attackers has proven difficult in many situations. The abused women are often reluctant to talk about the attacks and to go through the emotional and sometimes threatening process of identifying and testifying against the perpetrators, who may be individuals in authority.

4. Protection of displaced women and children

31. Internally displaced women and children have many of these same protection problems. Their situation is compounded, however, because they are still within their country of origin, subject to the authority of their own Government rather than receiving the international supervision available to refugees. The Government, indeed, may be the source of persecution. The constraints on

providing international protection to these individuals are substantial, particularly where a Government refuses access by international organizations.

B. Assistance issues affecting refugee and displaced women and children

32. Refugee and displaced women and children have a range of assistance needs, some shared with men, others unique to each group's gender and age. Some of these needs are common to others living in developing countries, other needs are unique to the uprooted.

1. Access to food, water and other supplies

33. Equal access to food, water and other basic supplies is a key issue. Malnutrition is the leading cause of death of refugees. Decisions on food distribution are generally made by international organizations and national Governments in consultation with male refugee leaders, who often have an inadequate understanding of the needs and circumstances of those who actually use these items - the women. As a result, food distribution procedures and the content of the food ration may be inappropriate.

2. Health

34. Inadequacies in the food ration present health problems for refugee and displaced women and children who are particularly susceptible to nutritional deficiencies, particularly lack of iron, calcium, iodine and vitamin C. Waterborne diseases present special problems for refugee and displaced women who are the primary collectors of water. Overcrowding and poor sanitation compound these problems. One consequence is that the infant mortality rate is usually higher than that of the surrounding population. Women and children may also face particular mental health problems arising from torture and sexual abuse, loss of traditional support systems and difficulties in adjusting to life as a refugee.

35. Access to health services can be made particularly difficult by several factors: lack of female health-care personnel; absence of services targeted at gynaecological problems and family planning; lack of rape counselling programmes; inconvenient hours and the distant location of health facilities; and over-emphasis on curative health services rather than on the preventive services needed to keep women and children healthy, such as immunizations, health education and sanitation services.

3. Education and skills training

36. Primary education for refugee and displaced children is inadequate. Fewer than 500,000 of an estimated 5 million children receiving assistance from UNHCR are enrolled in primary school. There are a few exceptions, for example, in the areas assisted by UNRWA it is almost universal for girls as well as boys. The access to education by refugee children in most countries is poorer by contrast both to the host country population and the country of origin. The situation for refugee girls is particularly bad in some locations: among Afghan refugees, for example, only one-tenth of 1 per cent of school-age girls are enrolled in primary education classes.

37. Availability of skills training and adult literacy programmes is inadequate. These programmes are often targeted at men or require a level of prior

education that many refugee women were unable to attain in their countries of origin. In addition, few programmes address the need for day care.

4. Economic activities

38. Many refugees and displaced persons live in female-headed households where women must assume full economic responsibility. Their economic activities include employment with assistance agencies, employment in the host country economy, home gardening, trading of food rations for other needed items, trades and small businesses.

39. In most countries, the economic opportunities for refugee and displaced women are limited. Among the constraints are: laws preventing the employment of refugees; lack of marketable skills; high levels of unemployment or under-employment among the host country population; and cultural constraints on women working outside of the home. In some locations, where refugee women present a cheap source of manual labour, they are able to obtain jobs but face below minimum wages and poor working conditions. A resort to prostitution in the absence of other means of employment has been reported by UNHCR. 5/

40. Income-generation programmes have been established in a number of countries to provide greater opportunities for refugee women. The programmes are generally small and, while often beneficial to the limited number of women who are enrolled, have tended not to lead to full economic self-sufficiency.

C. Participation of refugee and displaced women in decision-making

41. In its 1988 conclusions on women refugees, the UNHCR Executive Committee noted "the need to promote their participation as agents, as well as beneficiaries, in the planning of protection and assistance programmes". 6/ It emphasized that female refugees should be treated as the equals of male refugees.

42. Refugee women in decision-making positions and in the administrative bodies in the refugee camps and settlements remains low. Many such bodies do not have as many women representatives as the proportion of women refugees warrants. In one case study on Mozambican women presented to the Expert Group (EGM/RDWC/1990/CS.9), it was stated that many refugee women were unaware of the existence of these administrative committees or did not know how the committees were formed.

43. Some exceptions demonstrate the potential for involving refugee women in decision-making. In several countries in Africa and Central America, female co-ordinators have been elected by the camp population to help to oversee the distribution of goods and to ensure that the special needs of women are taken into account.

II. LONGER TERM SOLUTIONS TO REFUGEE SITUATIONS

44. Finding longer term solutions for those who have been forced to flee their homes so that they do not remain indefinitely in camps dependent on international assistance is a major international goal. The most desirable solution for refugees is voluntary repatriation to their country of origin. If return is not possible, the next best solution is settlement in a country of first

asylum, generally a neighbouring country that often shares the language, economic structure and environment of the home country. The third solution is resettlement in a third country, often one at some distance from the country of origin. Although least desirable because it entails major adjustments to a new culture and usually a new economic situation, resettlement has proven to be a necessary protection measure for some refugees who are unable to remain in a country of asylum. It may also be an appropriate solution for refugees with close family in the third country.

A. Repatriation

45. Many of the physical protection issues facing refugee women and children during flight recur during their return, particularly when it is spontaneous and unassisted. For example, they may be subject to the same type of physical and sexual abuse from border guards in returning to their home country. The internally displaced may face similar problems in returning to their home villages.

46. A particular problem is the actual decision to return. Often, decisions on return are made by camp leaders and there may be little opportunity for women to express their views either as a group or as individuals. In some situations, women who would like to return to their homes are unable to because male leaders have determined that no one should return. Under other circumstances, women may be compelled to return "voluntarily" because of reductions in assistance, poor living conditions and physical abuse. A third issue is that women are not always given the information needed to make an informed choice.

47. Other issues relate to the repatriation of women and children. Often, the infrastructures of countries that produce refugees have been destroyed during the wars and violence that caused the movements. Refugees and the internally displaced may return to villages that no longer have health clinics, roads, schools, food stores or other basic items. It may be months or years before the communities become self-sustaining. During this period, most of the assistance issues - access to food, access to health care, education, employment - already discussed in the context of refugee movements continue to be problems.

B. Settlement in countries of asylum

48. In some countries, particularly in Africa, refugees have been permitted to remain indefinitely in the country in which they initially sought asylum. Some move into rural settlements, others spontaneously settle in cities. For a period, the settled refugees are generally given international assistance to help them to adjust and to minimize their impact on the host countries. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the use of development-oriented assistance.

49. In rural settlements, many of the assistance issues encountered in camps and upon repatriation are also faced by refugee women and children. Access to schooling and health care are of particular concern, especially after the settlement has ceased to receive international assistance. The refugees may then be dependent on the health care and educational systems of the host country. Refugee women and children may be considered a low priority. Legal rights are also of concern. A study of rural settlements in Africa found that few refugees were accorded full legal and political rights, even those born in

the settlement. In effect, the residents remained refugees in their new homes. Without these rights, they had no capacity to influence political decisions that affected them. Absence of full legal rights also impeded their ability to attain full economic self-support because they could be denied access to markets, ownership of land and businesses, and the right to travel freely throughout the country. 7/ Access to employment and income support for particularly poor families is a further issue affecting refugee women who are settled in countries of asylum. Spontaneously settled refugees, particularly those living in urban settings, face further difficulties. Obtaining legal residence is often impossible, particularly where Governments, such as the Sudan, are trying to discourage settlement in the cities. Even in rural areas, spontaneously settled refugees often do not have identity cards, thereby limiting their access to services. 8/

50. The settlement of refugees in countries of asylum has an impact on the residents of the host country as well. Often, those most adversely affected by their presence are the poorest residents. As one report notes, "poorer hosts can lose from competition for food, work, wages, services and common property resources. Vulnerable hosts ... lack refugees' option of sending their weaker dependents to camps and settlements. 9/ Since women and children are often the most vulnerable groups or part of the population in developing countries, they may well be at the greatest disadvantage from the presence of refugees. This issue needs more attention from those planning assistance and development programmes in refugee situations.

51. The principal international development programmes are not designed to deal with the problems of refugees. Many lack a mandate to work in refugee communities, their experience has not been in this field or the funding available is intended for projects to develop the host country infrastructure for its nationals. At the same time, however, international development assistance has been mandated to be sensitive to the role and contribution of women in development, and considerable experience has been acquired that could be applied to refugee and non-refugee populations alike.

52. This is particularly important in situations where refugees may have to await durable solutions for many years and during this time they find a means of contributing to their own future. Taking a developmental approach at an early stage of a refugee emergency can establish a basis of self-reliance on which development planners can build in long-term refugee situations. The issue is to determine to what extent the potential of long-term refugees can be built into development assistance to the areas where they are settled for long periods and how assistance to them can contribute to broader development.

C. Third-country resettlement

53. Most of the refugee women and children who are resettled in third countries enter as part of a complete family unit. 10/ Among some refugee populations, however, a significant number of female-headed households have been resettled. Resettlement of unaccompanied minors has characterized other refugee groups. Efforts have been made to find resettlement opportunities for women who are particularly at risk in countries of first asylum, including single women as well as victims of piracy, rape and torture.

54. All resettled refugees, regardless of their family composition, face adjustment problems. These problems can be particularly acute where the culture of the home country and the resettlement country are markedly

different. Most resettled refugees are faced with the need to learn a new language; find and maintain employment (often being exposed for the first time to industrial economies); and adapt to life in urban settings (a difficult process for those who have only lived in rural areas prior to resettlement).

55. For refugee women, such an adjustment may be exceedingly difficult. For those who remain at home, learning the language will be a prime problem since they will have little opportunity of using it. Yet, failure to do so will reduce their ability to cope with the new society. This often leads to isolation, with refugee women becoming house-bound and dependent on their husbands and children. For refugee women who seek employment, resettlement may mean a different change in lifestyle. These women may be working outside their home for the first time, which may lead to changes in spousal relationships. Husbands may be frustrated by their inability to provide sufficiently for their families, and domestic violence may result. Finally, the need for child-care services is acute among many resettled women. Lack of child care impedes access to services as well as employment.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

2/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, No. 2545, p. 137.

3/ Ibid., vol. 1001, No. 14691, p. 45.

4/ Figures compiled by States, Refugees (UNHCR), No. 71, December 1989, pp. 22-23.

5/ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Labour Organisation, Self Reliance for Refugees in Sudan (1983).

6/ Addendum to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Official Records of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 12A) (A/43/12/Add.1).

7/ Lance Clark, "Key issues in post-emergency refugee assistance in Eastern and Southern Africa", Migration News, No. 1, January-March 1988, pp. 14-16.

8/ Ibid., pp. 16-20; and Julia Vadala Taft, Issues and Options for Refugee Women in Developing Countries (Washington, D.C., Refugee Policy Group, 1987), pp. 16-17.

9/ Robert Chambers, "Hidden losers? The impact of rural refugees and refugee programs on poorer hosts", International Migration Review, No. 20, Summer 1986, p. 245.

10/ See, for example, United States Department of State, Bureau for Refugee Programs, World Refugee Report (Washington, D.C., 1990), p. 93.

Annex

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON REFUGEE AND DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN
(Vienna, 2-6 July 1990)

A. Policy framework

1. The Expert Group on Refugee and Displaced Women and Children, recognizing that more than 75 per cent of the world's refugees and displaced persons are women and young children, and affirming the fundamental equality of refugee and displaced women and men, and the necessity for women's full participation and empowerment in the development of their potential for self-sufficiency, recommends that:

(a) The civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of refugee and displaced women and children should be reaffirmed by the international community, with due regard to relevant international universal and regional legal instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a/ the Convention on the Rights of the Child, b/ the 1951 Convention c/ and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, d/ the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, e/ and the two Additional Protocols of 1977; f/

(b) The root causes of refugee situations and their related solutions should be addressed in an urgent manner at the national, regional and international level;

(c) The international instruments related to refugees, humanitarian law, women and children should be ratified or acceded to and implemented by all Governments that have not yet done so.

2. The Expert Group recommends the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session g/ calling on Governments, relevant United Nations agencies and concerned non-governmental organizations to increase their efforts to respond to the specific needs of refugee women, in particular those of long-term refugees, as well as of displaced women, in the areas of education, health, physical safety, social services, skills training, employment and income-generating activities, and to involve refugee women in the planning and implementation of such programmes.

3. The Expert Group, recognizing the importance of co-ordination between the entire international community in order to improve efforts on behalf of refugee and displaced women and children, recommends the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/137 of 15 December 1989, in which, inter alia, the agencies of the United Nations system as well as all other relevant international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, were invited to establish as soon as possible specific mechanisms of co-operation to assure an agreed division of responsibilities and arrangements for the financing of operational activities relating to refugees.

4. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) and other relevant organizations should utilize every conceivable strategy to increase their resource pool in order to enhance their ability to cover the entire range of needs of refugees

and the displaced. Particular attention should be paid to those strategies contributing to the well-being of refugee and displaced women and children.

B. Components of policies

5. Relevant United Nations and other international and regional organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and funding agencies that play a role in the protection of and/or assistance to refugees and displaced persons should each be encouraged to develop a policy statement on refugee and displaced women and children, including a time frame for its implementation. This policy statement should provide for the full integration of the concern for refugee and displaced women and children into every aspect of that agency's mandate and programmes.

6. Assistance and protection efforts should be built upon a realistic assessment of the resources, capabilities, needs and priorities of refugee and displaced women and children. Appropriate accountability and monitoring procedures should be introduced to ensure that programmes proposed by organizations address those factors and ensure that refugee and displaced women and children have equal access to the services that will be provided.

7. Refugee and displaced women themselves should be full and active partners in the process of assessing their needs, planning and implementing programmes and making all other decisions that affect their lives in order for assistance and protection activities to be truly effective.

8. The international community, in its concerted response to refugee situations, should give priority to extending international protection to refugee women and children and to seeking appropriate durable solutions to their problems.

9. In view of the close link between protection and assistance measures, protection concerns should be borne in mind when planning and implementing assistance programmes since assistance is an integral part of strategies used to protect refugees.

10. Refugee and displaced women and children should be protected from physical violence, sexual abuse, abduction and those circumstances that force them into prostitution and/or other illegal activities.

11. Given the need for durable solutions for refugee women and children, all assistance from the outset of a refugee emergency should build on the capacities and resources of refugee women and lead to long-term self-reliance.

12. Refugee and displaced women and children are affected to a greater extent than men by displacement. The international community should further strengthen its efforts to address the problems and causes contributing to the displacement and to the outflow of asylum seekers, as well as develop measures that encourage voluntary repatriation and local reintegration.

13. Access to affected refugee and displaced populations should be ensured so that assistance and protection can reach those, particularly refugee women and children, in need of such programmes.

14. United Nations bodies, national government agencies and non-governmental organizations that have a proven capacity to design and implement projects for

women and children should be involved in programming for refugees and displaced persons.

15. The international community should more effectively target assistance to the refugee-affected areas of host countries, with particular focus on the most vulnerable populations in these areas.

16. In the promotion of voluntary repatriation and local integration, information should be directed in particular to refugee women.

17. National, regional and international agencies should collect and analyse data on refugees, returnees and displaced persons, with a particular focus on gender disaggregation.

18. Gender-sensitive staff, women in particular, should be recruited and advanced to management and field positions in international organizations, national Governments and non-governmental organizations in order to provide appropriate assistance to refugee and displaced women. Key staff of organizations working with refugees and displaced persons should receive gender-impact-awareness training.

19. Objective information about the situation of refugee and displaced women and children should be available to the international community.

20. The needs of older refugee women should be given special consideration in the design and implementation of programmes.

C. Protection of refugee women and children

21. Refugees themselves should be invited to provide support for improving the protection of refugee women and of refugee children. The establishment of women's associations should be encouraged, as should that of refugee committees, which should include refugee women.

22. The staff of relevant organizations and authorities, including local military and law enforcement agencies, should be made fully aware of the rights and needs of refugee women and children.

23. Refugee women and children should be informed of their rights and entitlements.

24. Refugee women should provide greater input to developing mechanisms to improve the reporting of physical and sexual abuse, establishing preventive measures, and planning and implementing corresponding assistance and other programmes.

25. As appropriate, relevant organizations and host Governments should increase their female field protection and assistance staff who, as part of their functions, would have the specific task of assisting in identifying and providing support for refugee women and children who may be the victims of physical violence and sexual abuse. Host Governments and other relevant authorities should ensure that such staff have direct and unhindered access to refugee women and children.

26. The presence of qualified personnel, in particular international staff, of relevant organizations should be strengthened along escape routes, and in

reception centres, camps and settlements and other areas where refugee women and children find themselves in order to assist in providing greater protection for the affected populations and to monitor and report regularly on the situation.

27. The physical security of refugee women and children should be ensured in camps and settlements.

28. Military or armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements should be prohibited.

29. Host Governments and other relevant authorities should undertake special law enforcement measures in order to ensure that persons who have committed crimes against refugee women and children are prosecuted.

30. Refugee women and children who are the victims of violence should be addressed as a matter of priority through professional and cultural counselling as well as gender-based counselling and other services.

31. Women who claim refugee status should have full and equal access to procedures to determine refugee status and should be appropriately assisted, including assistance from women interviewers, to present their claims in the hearing process.

32. Individual identification or registration documents should be issued to all refugee and returnee women and, whenever possible, children, whether their refugee status has been determined individually or as part of a group in a mass influx situation. Such documents should be issued irrespective of whether the women and children are accompanied by male family members.

33. Training should be provided to sensitize those responsible for interviewing and assessing the claims of women asylum-seekers.

34. Governments should be encouraged to adopt and implement "Women at Risk" programmes to resettle those refugee women who are in critical conditions, and who may not otherwise meet existing admissibility criteria.

D. Protection of refugee and displaced children

35. The life and physical well-being of refugee and displaced children should be given the highest priority. Such children should be protected against all types of aggression, including physical violence and sexual abuse.

36. Advocacy efforts at international and national levels should be encouraged to assure the rights of children, including refugee and displaced children, to survival, protection and development by promoting a "child first" ethos and the idea of "children as a zone of peace".

37. In every emergency involving refugees and displaced children, a recognized "child advocate" should be designated by appropriate international organizations to advocate for the protection and well-being of children including, but not limited to, children who are unaccompanied, subjected to recruitment, abused, imprisoned, detained or coerced into practices that violate their cultures or beliefs.

38. The recruitment of refugee and displaced children into armed forces and armed groups should be vigorously denounced and all necessary steps taken to end this practice.

39. Special provisions should be implemented for the determination of refugee status for unaccompanied minors, keeping in mind that the decisions should be based on the best interests of the child.

40. Appropriate accommodation should be provided to children to ensure their safety, well-being and physical and mental health during the period of determining their status.

41. Given the increasing numbers of undocumented and stateless children, special initiatives should be taken and more effective procedures developed to establish nationality as well as to change national laws that cause statelessness.

E. Protection of displaced women and children

42. Designation of persons as displaced and recognition of their plight should be made. Since most of the protection problems faced by refugee women and children are common to those of displaced women and children, national Governments and the international community should address the issue of displaced women and children as a matter of urgency, taking into account the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 h/ and the two Additional Protocols of 1977. i/

43. Governments should respect and implement relevant international humanitarian and other legal instruments, as well as appropriate regional and national instruments.

44. National Governments should ensure the provision of protection and assistance to displaced women and children while in places of temporary residence until such time as an appropriate solution is found, and assess the need for additional international instruments to address those protection concerns.

45. The mandates of the international organizations that address the needs of displaced women and children should be examined, clarified and strengthened as needed.

F. Assistance to refugee and displaced women and children

1. Food distribution

46. To combat malnutrition and to increase self-reliance, refugee and displaced women should have the opportunity of producing, trading or otherwise acquiring food. To the extent that food assistance continues to be needed, women should play key leadership roles in its distribution.

2. Nutrition

47. Food rations should be nutritionally balanced, have adequate caloric content and be consistent with traditional dietary practices. Special attention should be paid to the needs of children, women of child-bearing age, and the elderly.

48. The World Food Programme (WFP) and other donors of food aid should be encouraged to fortify food aid with the necessary vitamins and minerals.

49. Systems for monitoring the nutritional status of all refugee and displaced women and children should be established. Refugee and displaced women should be trained to monitor their nutritional status and that of their children. Where there are nutritional deficiencies or where a declining nutritional status is detected, immediate steps should be taken to improve the nutritional contents of the rations.

50. Programmes to educate refugee and displaced women regarding nutrition should be established or strengthened as needed.

3. Health

51. Refugee and displaced women should participate fully in the design and implementation of all refugee health programmes. These should emphasize primary health care and should be community-based. Women-home-visitor and traditional-birth-attendant programmes should be included.

52. Institutions operating health programmes for refugee and displaced persons should be strongly encouraged to increase significantly the number of women staff. Increased efforts should be made to identify and train women, including refugee and displaced women, as health workers.

53. Immunization, maternal and child health services, including gynaecological services, education regarding sexually transmitted diseases and harmful traditional practices, family planning education and services, and services for the elderly, should be available, as well as rehabilitation programmes for disabled women and children.

54. Counselling and mental health services should be available, particularly for victims of torture, rape and other sexual abuse, trauma and physical violence.

4. Water

55. All refugee and displaced women and children should have access to safe drinking water and sanitary facilities, taking into account the special situation of uprooted women.

56. Refugee and displaced women should be involved in the identification of requirements and preferences concerning the type and location of water points and should be trained in their use and maintenance.

57. Culturally appropriate resources should be made available to enable women to collect and use water.

5. Shelter

58. Refugee and displaced women should be consulted as to their needs and priorities in the development of any site plan or housing/community infrastructure.

59. Plans for the placement and construction of housing should provide for as much long-term security as possible and facilitate the daily tasks of refugee and displaced women.

60. Refugee and displaced women should be involved in the maintenance and improvement of existing community facilities.

61. In urban areas, the allowance provided for housing should be sufficient to provide safe housing, and whenever possible, should be issued to the female adult in the household.

6. Adult education, employment and income generation

62. Refugee and displaced women should be included in the planning and implementation of skills training and employment and income-generating programmes for the whole refugee community. Special programmes for women may sometimes be necessary for cultural reasons.

63. Scholarship schemes should ensure an equitable participation of refugee and displaced women.

64. Certificates should be provided for formal and non-formal education so that these qualifications can be recognized in countries of asylum, origin, integration and/or resettlement.

65. Training programmes should be promoted with the objective of providing refugee and displaced women with marketable and business skills in traditional and non-traditional activities, including skills training in agricultural and non-agricultural activities, functional literacy and numeracy, leadership and managerial training.

66. Viable and sustainable employment creation schemes and income-generating activities should be designed and implemented on the basis of sound needs assessment, research and feasibility studies, with the full participation of refugee and displaced women. Projects should be assessed to determine their impact.

67. Host Governments should be encouraged to issue work permits and other relevant documents to refugee women.

68. Support and assistance should be given to refugee and displaced women to form associations of their own choosing, including the promotion of informal and formal organizations and co-operatives.

69. The capacity and information-sharing of organizations involved in employment and income-generating activities for refugee and displaced persons should be improved.

70. To the extent possible, host Governments and other relevant authorities should be encouraged to provide refugee and displaced women with opportunities for productive activities, including access to land that is at least sufficient for household gardening and animal husbandry.

7. Long-term solutions

71. Whenever repatriation, local integration and resettlement are possible, refugee women should participate in planning assistance and rehabilitation programmes and should be provided with adequate information to make decisions on their own futures.

8. Data gathering

72. The government agencies responsible and the relevant organizations of the United Nations system should compile statistics and demographic profiles of the refugee and displaced population that highlight information on gender, age, household composition, education, skills status and other relevant facts. In addition, information should be collected on the general impact of the uprooting experience on refugee and displaced women, including a full assessment of the various activities for which they are responsible.

73. Gender-delineated statistics should be collected to determine the number of women and children utilizing programmes in all spheres affecting the life of refugee and displaced persons: education, training, employment, health care etc.

74. All assistance programmes should have a monitoring and self-evaluation component. When necessary, training in programme evaluation should be provided to those implementing programmes. In addition, the Governments and the United Nations bodies responsible should regularly evaluate programmes to ensure the quality of the services and the access of refugee and displaced women to them.

75. Research should be conducted on such urgent issues as the needs of refugee women and children upon repatriation, given the potential for the return of millions of refugees and the situation of internally displaced women.

G. Assistance to refugee and displaced children

1. Survival

76. Relevant United Nations bodies and other international and regional organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and funding agencies should join in actions to achieve the survival and well-being of women and children through the attainment of child survival and development goals for the 1990s, and make special efforts to ensure that refugee and displaced children and mothers are included therein by, for instance:

(a) Strengthening efforts for the immunization of refugee and displaced children against the six immunizable diseases, as part of the global thrust to achieve universal child immunization, and for sustaining that coverage in the future;

(b) Strengthening efforts for the universal immunization of refugee and displaced mothers with tetanus toxoid and for sustaining coverage;

(c) Educating all refugee and displaced mothers in the use of oral rehydration therapy and ensuring its proper use to combat diarrhoeal dehydration;

(d) Training and equipping adequate numbers of primary health-care workers, including home visitors and traditional birth attendants, to ensure that basic pre-natal and post-natal care and safe birth delivery methods are available to refugee and displaced women;

(e) Establishing systems of monitoring the nutritional status of all refugee and displaced children and ensuring actions against nutritional deficiencies through appropriate programme interventions. Where a nutritional

deficiency or a declining nutritional status is detected, immediate interventions should be made;

(f) Taking into consideration whenever possible in food distribution traditional diets and food preparation practices;

(g) Ensuring that all refugee and displaced persons have access to safe drinking water and sanitary facilities, taking into consideration the special needs of children.

77. Persons with a special responsibility for the well-being of children should be part of every emergency programme.

2. Education and skills training

78. Governments and international organizations should take immediate steps to ensure that all refugee and displaced children have access to basic education.

79. Female and male refugee and displaced children should have equal access to education programmes. Specific efforts should be made to enable adolescent girls to complete their studies.

80. Education programmes should be adapted to the needs of the refugee population including instruction in the mother tongue.

81. In situations where the formal school system fails or is unable to provide school opportunities to refugee and displaced children, alternative methods should be found to ensure that basic and primary education are available and accessible.

82. Governments, international organizations and the community of non-governmental organizations should provide skills and vocational training to refugee and displaced children to enhance their development and to provide basic life skills.

83. The need for education for female children should be brought to the attention of male leaders of refugee and displaced persons.

84. Governments and other authorities should make every effort to ensure the continuity of the education systems established for refugees and displaced persons.

3. Children in situations of armed conflict

85. Support should be provided to expand the level of humanitarian aid and protection to children in conflict situations, including those displaced within their own country, by building upon and expanding the successful work carried out by international, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

4. Children with special needs

Unaccompanied children

86. Based on the best interests of the child, special efforts should be taken to ensure that the care and protection of unaccompanied children is guaranteed,

including, where necessary, actions related to the following: identification, documentation, ensuring basic services, tracing and where possible reunifying families, assigning a legal advocate, and ensuring adequate care arrangements (avoiding institutionalization where possible) on an emergency, interim and permanent basis.

Disabled children

87. Special efforts should be taken to ensure that disabled children receive assistance that will enable them to participate to the extent possible as full members of society.

Female children

88. Special emphasis should be given to ensure that female children have equal access to all services and opportunities.

Traumatized children

89. Refugee and displaced children should have access to counselling and mental health services, particularly if they are victims of torture, rape and other physical and sexual abuse. Training should be provided to mothers, teachers and health workers to enable them to identify problems and to refer children for appropriate services.

Notes

a/ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

b/ General Assembly resolution, 44/25, annex.

c/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 89, No. 2545.

d/ Ibid., vol. 606, No. 8791.

e/ Ibid., vol. 75, Nos. 970-973.

f/ Ibid., vol. 1125, Nos. 17512-17513.

g/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1990, Supplement No. 5 (E/1990/25), chap. I, sect. C, resolution 34/2.

h/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, Nos. 970-973.

i/ Ibid., vol. 1125, Nos. 17512-17513.

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PROGRAMMING AND CO-ORDINATION MATTERS RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

The future of the Trust Fund for the Monitoring and Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1989/30, requested a report on the future of the Trust Fund for the Monitoring and Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. The report describes the extent of the use of the Trust Fund during 1990-1991 and the use of extrabudgetary project funding for activities at the national, subregional and regional levels, and in addition contains recommendations on the future of the Trust Fund.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Council, by its resolution 1989/30, decided that the Trust Fund for the Preparatory Activities of the 1985 World Conference on Women to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women should be continued for the biennium 1990-1991 under the terms of reference set out in Council resolution 1988/18. Those terms of reference were to facilitate the global exchange of information, and to enhance the preparation of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women by the dissemination of the results of discussions on the priority themes and on the monitoring, review and appraisal to a wider audience.

2. The Council urged the Secretary-General, in implementing that decision, to improve collaboration with the specialized agencies and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in consultation with their governing bodies, as required. Finally, it requested a report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session on the future of the Trust Fund.

3. By resolution 1987/24, the Council established the long-term programme of work for the Commission and approved the convening of expert group meetings, as part of that programme, when regular budgetary or extrabudgetary resources were available. The Trust Fund has been used since then to finance expert group meetings and seminars, in the preparation of reports on the priority themes and for information dissemination. Following the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the Council recommended, by resolution 1990/15, that sufficient resources should be allocated within the existing regular budget to meet national requests and maintain co-ordinated international activities at a level that will make possible the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

4. Requests for policy analysis information dissemination and the necessity of dealing with global social and economic developments have increased. Moreover, there has been a growing need for the Secretariat to provide services to Governments, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. Such activities are additional to the core work of the Division for the Advancement of Women as focal point of women's issues in the United Nations system and as secretariat of the Commission and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Also, the Council, by resolution 1990/12, has recommended the convening of a world conference on women in 1995. Extrabudgetary funds will be needed if the programme of work is to be completed and the requests received from intergovernmental bodies honoured in full.

I. ACTIVITIES FUNDED FROM THE TRUST FUND DURING 1990-1991

A. Activities in 1990

5. UNIFEM approved a project for the year 1990 by which resources were provided through the Trust Fund for activities including: (a) dissemination of information to national machinery; (b) seminars on refugee women and on female-headed households; (c) information systems to support national machinery.

6. The funds remaining in the Trust Fund were allocated to finance a publication on household, gender and age, prepared jointly with the United Nations University in Tokyo, and provision for staff travel necessary to provide input to the reports on priority themes.

7. In addition, earmarked grants have been provided to the Trust Fund during 1990, as follows:

(a) The Government of the Netherlands funded a study on equality in political participation. The project was to follow up the priority theme for equality in 1990. A consultant, using the information gathered at an expert group meeting in 1989, prepared a publication on two areas of political participation: women in political positions and women in the civil service. This publication will provide background material for the Interregional Consultation on Women in Public Life to be held in 1991;

(b) The Government of Sweden provided most of the funding for the seminars on women and HIV/AIDS and the role of national machinery for the advancement of women, as requested in Council decision 1989/127 on activities to assist women in the fight against the AIDS pandemic. That decision followed the priority theme report in 1989 to the Commission on the effects of AIDS on the advancement of women (E/CN.6/1989/6/Add.1).

B. Activities proposed for funding in 1991

8. Activities to be funded during 1991 from the balance in the Trust Fund or from earmarked grants to the Fund include:

(a) Dissemination of information to national machinery;

(b) Seminars on the integration of women in development, and on aging women and development;

(c) Information systems to support national machinery;

(d) Consultant fees and travel costs incurred in preparing the additional priority theme report on women and the environment.

C. Funds from other United Nations sources in 1990

9. The United Nations Population Fund provided financial assistance for a seminar held at Lomé, Togo, in April 1990 on the interrelationships between the status of women and demographic phenomena in sub-Saharan francophone Africa. The participants were experts on population matters, directors of population units and representatives from national machinery. The seminar recommended further progress in three major fields: research on the impact of migration, on the determinants of fertility and on the situation of fostered children; planning of population programmes with the focus on the status of women; and the activities of national machinery. Similar collaboration is planned for other regions, for example, East Africa, East Asia, North Africa.

II. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN

10. During the preparation of the 1990-1991 programme, UNIFEM was consulted. Most of the extrabudgetary funding for 1990 was provided by UNIFEM under project GLO/90/W02: "International action to strengthen national machineries for women and development". The project was approved on an exceptional and experimental basis by the UNIFEM Consultative Committee. The question of a longer term commitment by UNIFEM to support the global programme for the advancement of women was the subject of informal consultations between the organizations concerned and with members of the UNIFEM Consultative Committee. As a result of those discussions, the Division for the Advancement of Women was advised that such a long-term commitment would not be consistent with the priorities and orientations approved for UNIFEM.

11. It has been suggested, instead, that it would be more appropriate in future to seek UNIFEM funding for specific activities in developing countries that are consistent with UNIFEM priorities and are related to the global programme. These would be reviewed on a project-by-project basis.

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRAGEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Proposals for the preparation and convening of the world conference on women in 1995

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in response to the request in Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/12 of 24 May 1990 that the Secretary-General make proposals on the preparation and convening of a world conference on women, to be held in 1995, for submission to the Commission at its thirty-fifth session. It outlines the initial preparations that have been made and the action required of the Commission to initiate the subsequent steps to be taken.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 1987/20 of 26 May 1987, the Economic and Social Council recommended that world conferences to review and appraise the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1/ be held during the decade of the 1990s, at a date to be determined by the General Assembly not later than 1990, and in 2000. In its resolution 1990/12 of 24 May 1990, the Council recommended that a world conference on women be held in 1995. The Council requested the Commission on the Status of Women, as the preparatory body for the world conference, to include preparations for the conference in its regular work programme during the period 1991-1995 under the item on monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (item 4 of the provisional agenda). It requested the Secretary-General to include the relevant costs of preparing and convening the world conference in the programme budget of the Organization for the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995 within the respective budgetary limits and further requested the Secretary-General to make proposals on the preparation and convening of the conference for submission to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session.

2. The present report has been prepared in compliance with resolution 1990/12 and contains the recommendations of the Secretary-General, where appropriate.

I. ORIENTATION OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

3. The world conference on women, to be held in 1995, should conduct the second quinquennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, 1/ as stipulated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1988/22 of 26 May 1988, and identify those measures necessary to ensure that its objectives are achieved during the last five years of the century.

4. In adopting resolution 1990/12, the Council expressed its conviction that without a major international event on which to focus national attention on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, the review and appraisal to take place in 1995 would not be given sufficient priority. National review and appraisal should therefore be seen as the centrepiece of the preparations for the conference.

5. The conference itself should be designed as a forum, the preparations for which will allow national attention to be focused on the advancement of women, thereby generating support for the issue. It should provide Governments, intergovernmental organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system with a focus for their own preparations of national reviews and appraisals and for the exchange of experience. The conference should result in targets for implementing key aspects of the Forward-looking Strategies during the rest of the decade and a heightened interest in the issue at all levels.

6. If the 1995 world conference is to promote widespread interest in the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, it should be so designed and conducted as to engage the attention of the women of the world. Public information strategies will be essential and the world conference should be widely publicized as soon as its main themes and focus have been agreed on. In order to expedite awareness about the aims and objectives of the conference, it is

suggested that the Commission should select a short title for the conference and identify a very limited number of main themes, based on the principles of the Forward-looking Strategies.

7. The designing of a conference poster at an early date, possibly by means of an international competition, should be an instrument for advance publicity, once the dates and venue have been decided on.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Secretary-General of the world conference

8. In its resolution 45/129 of 14 December 1990, the General Assembly requested the Commission to ask the Secretary-General to appoint, not later than 1992, the Secretary-General of the Conference. Secretaries-general of previous world conferences on women have been either appointed specifically for the conference or given that task ex officio.

B. Venue of the conference

9. In the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (A/45/489), it was assumed that, as a headquarters conference, the world conference in 1995 would be held at Vienna, the headquarters of the substantive secretariat unit dealing with the advancement of women. An official invitation was subsequently received by the Secretary-General from the Government of Austria to hold the world conference at Vienna. To date, no other invitations have been received.

10. In its resolution 45/129, the General Assembly took note of the invitation of the Government of Austria and requested the Commission to decide on the venue of the Conference, not later than 1992, taking into account that preference should be given to those regions that had not yet held a world conference on women. Previous conferences were held at Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985).

III. SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATIONS

A. National level

11. At the national level, emphasis should be placed on the preparation of detailed national reports on what has been accomplished during the last 10 years and particularly during the last five years. While the reports should be tailored to national conditions and should be used primarily as a means for self-examination, they should be guided by the Forward-looking Strategies and the recommendations arising from the first review and appraisal in 1990. It would be important for the Commission to establish guidelines for the preparation of national reports, based on the experience gained during the first review and appraisal, so that the work is carried out with the maximum effect. If necessary, advisory assistance on the preparation of the reports could be provided by organizations of the United Nations system.

12. As part of the preparations at the national level, activities should be undertaken to make the population aware of the issues and of the conference. Advantage should be taken of all sources of possible assistance for such activities as networking and training using development co-operation funds. Governments might consider organizing national review and appraisal conferences during 1993 and 1994. In addition to providing a substantive contribution to national reports, the conferences would dramatize the importance of the appraisal process and create a heightened level of awareness within the country about the advancement of women. Invitations to such conferences should, where possible, be extended to the national machinery of other countries and to the United Nations system in order to gain a comparative perspective on the national situation. Media coverage and public information campaigns should form an integral part of the national preparations.

B. Regional level

13. As in previous world conferences, regional review and appraisal meetings organized by the regional commissions are expected to play an important role in identifying particular regional priorities and providing input at the global level. Regional meetings have already been planned in Asia and the Pacific for 1993, and in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa for 1994. A decision on a European meeting is expected to be made by the Economic Commission for Europe in April 1991. At the time of preparation of this report, no plans had been made for Western Asia.

C. Global level

14. As the preparatory body for the conference, the Commission is expected to review preparations for the conference as part of its regular work under item 4 of the provisional agenda: Monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. It should review the administrative and substantive preparations, establish guidelines for the preparation of national reports, oversee a public information programme designed to inform women about the conference and examine the contribution of non-governmental organizations.

15. The main document for the review and appraisal will be the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. Principles for the preparation of that report were set out by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1990/9 of 24 May 1990, and an outline of the report is to be submitted to the Commission for consideration at its thirty-sixth session. Drafts of the review and appraisal, and possible recommendations arising from it, should be reviewed by the Commission as part of its preparatory work for the conference. After revision on the basis of the Commission's review, these would then form the main documentation of the conference.

16. The formal monitoring procedure under this regular agenda item is biennial, taking place in even-numbered years on the basis of a report by the Secretary-General entitled: "Monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women". For this reason, particular attention to the preparation of the conference should be given in odd-numbered years according to a planned sequence of issues to be dealt with at each session, as follows:

(a) 1991 (no monitoring report): Determination of main themes for the world conference in the light of the Forward-looking Strategies; formulation of guidelines for a public information programme;

(b) 1992 (monitoring report): Consideration of the first draft of guidelines for the preparation of the review and appraisal at the national level in terms of the main themes; consideration of the outline of the second report of the Secretary-General on review and appraisal;

(c) 1993 (no monitoring report): Final determination of guidelines for national review and appraisal; establishment of the time schedule for the conference, its preparations and related events;

(d) 1994 (monitoring report) (session extended by two days): Consideration of the first draft of the review and appraisal at the international level; consideration of progress report on preparations for the conference; formulation of outline of structure of draft conclusions and recommendations;

(e) 1995 (review and appraisal) (session extended by two days): First review of draft review and appraisal, draft conclusions and recommendations and the final progress report on conference.

17. The full involvement of non-governmental organizations in the conference has been an essential feature of previous world conferences and has contributed to their success. It is expected that an NGO forum will also be organized for the 1995 conference. In order to take full advantage of the contribution of non-governmental organizations, the Commission should consider how the participation of non-governmental organizations in all preparatory processes could be actively encouraged. Consideration should be given to innovative ways of linking the NGO forum to the work of the conference itself, including the best means of supporting the preparatory activities for the forum.

IV. RESOURCES

A. Regular programme budget

18. The estimated additional costs resulting from preparation and holding of the Conference, totalling $496,300 for the biennium 1992-1993, $1,110,900 for the biennium 1994-1995 and $1,129,800 of conference-servicing costs for the biennium 1994-1995, have been reported to the General Assembly in the context of the revised estimates for 1990-1991 (A/C.5/45/31, annex). The necessary provisions will be made in the proposed programme budgets for the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995.

B. Extrabudgetary resources

19. As in previous conferences, the resources available under the regular budget provide a minimum core of substantive and conference services. While these are sufficient to run the conference itself, it has been found in the past that extrabudgetary funds can provide an additional impulse that can improve preparations, particularly at the national level, and deepen the impact of the conference itself. Several types of extrabudgetary support can be considered particularly important.

20. The parallel NGO forum should play a particularly important role at the 1995 conference. While much of the funding for the forum can be expected to be provided by the non-governmental organizations themselves, extrabudgetary funds for conference-related activities, as well as for the travel of representatives of non-governmental organizations from developing countries, would help to ensure the success of that event.

21. Although core funds exist in the regular budget for public information activities, extrabudgetary funds would be needed for the preparation of special materials. Furthermore, the organization of media events, seminars and related activities would extend the coverage.

22. Preparations at the national level are a major priority. International participation in national-level activities can be helpful, by introducing a comparative perspective, dramatizing the global nature of the issues and providing technical advice. Through undertaking missions to advise on the preparation of national reports and by participating in national events, the United Nations system can contribute to national action. While much of this international participation can be financed by the countries themselves, extrabudgetary funding can permit developing countries to make an international contribution to the national preparatory process.

23. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the future of the trust fund for the monitoring and review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (E/CN.6/1991/5), a trust fund for the 1995 conference is proposed to be established in order to provide a mechanism for receiving any extrabudgetary contributions that might be channelled through the United Nations for these purposes.

Note

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.